

SOVIET POLICY IX WARTIME

mistake. The main factor in the passing of the law, said the Vice-Commissar, was the section of the press that wanted to hinder good relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. In the light of the fact that the old concessions in the south remained untouched the ban on new oil concessions was illogical. It is the view of the Soviet government, he declared, that the Majlis must reconsider the whole problem. The Soviet concession proposals were very favorable to Iran and did not contain any features of imperialism. Kavtaradze concluded by saying that because of the deterioration of Soviet-Iranian relations he was obliged to leave Iran promptly. The next day, December 9, the Vice-Commissar left Iran for Moscow.

The first round of the Iranian-Soviet duel was over. In reality it was also a Soviet-Western duel. The tone of the Communist press in Iran after Kavtaradze's visit testified to this fact eloquently. These points of disagreement between the Western democracies and Russia that had been simmering throughout the war now flared up into the open as far as the Iranian press was concerned. The civil war in Greece, which had just begun, the Polish problem, and the over-all problem of oil in the Middle East were now volubly discussed, first by the Communist press and then, as a countermeasure, by the nationalist press. As time went on Great Britain found accusations of imperialism thrown at her. She was charged with aiding the fascist-reactionary regimes throughout the world, with oppressing India, and with exploiting Iran cruelly through the medium of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

In contrast, however, to the direct action characteristic of Kavtaradze's visit, Soviet policy reverted to indirect

methods. The main instrument of this indirect Soviet action was the Communist party Tudeh.

A TROJAN HORSE: THE TUDEH PARTY

The Tudeh Party was a reincarnation of the old Communist party of Iran. As pointed out in previous chapters, under the regime of Shah Reza the Communist party was obliged to go underground, and official persecution never permitted it to exert important influence in the country. In 1938 mass arrests by the Iranian police threw many Communists or Communist sympathizers into jail. There they